



9 January 2003

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W, Room TW-A325
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: **Ex Parte**

Section 68.4(a) of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid
Compatible Telephones, WT Docket No. 01-309

Dear Ms. Dortch:

SHHH hereby submits a paper that analyzes inductive coupling and interference issues between digital wireless phones and hearing aids, and offers suggestions for solutions that are technically feasible and available today.

CTIA, in its December 2002 ex parte presentation on the above proceeding, offered no new technical solutions to reducing the RF emission from wireless handsets to enable hearing aid and cochlear implant users to have access to mobile phones. Even though the wireless industry was instructed by the FCC back in 1995 to come up with solutions, very little progress has been made in the built-in design of handsets that emit less RF and non-RF interference. CTIA continues to put the onus on the hearing aid manufacturers and states "Increase hearing aid immunity – it is a known solution." Meanwhile their own solution is to focus on "Offer a variety of accessory devices for people who use hearing aids, including T-coil accessories such as loopsets" and a plan to "expand consumer outreach and education efforts."

Indeed increasing hearing aid immunity is part of the solution and the hearing aid manufacturers have gone a long way to comply with the industry agreement presented to the FCC in May 1996: “Report of the Steering Committee of the Hearing Aid Compatibility and Accessibility to Digital Wireless Telecommunications Summit Meeting.” The hearing aid manufacturers have increased the immunity of new hearing aids by at least 15 dB.

Even though there are today technically feasible solutions on the handset side, the wireless industry is not motivated to explore them, because they are not required to do so. Mobile phones are coming out with ever increasing features – speaker phones, video capability, you can practically cook your dinner with your mobile phone. All this takes research and innovation and yet that level of interest and technological development is not happening when it comes to accessibility – simply making mobile phones usable by hearing aid and cochlear implant users.

SHHH is a consumer non-profit organization and does not have the resources to carry out extensive testing of technical solutions. However, in discussions with engineers and listening to consumers’ actual experiences trying to use mobile phones with their hearing aids and cochlear implants, we have come up with several technically feasible solutions that could be incorporated into mobile phones today. None of the solutions are rocket science but rather modifications that can reasonably be made to reduce electromagnetic interference emitted from mobile phones.

The HAC exemption for wireless phones is not justified and must be lifted. Congress recognized the diversity in the population of people with hearing aids when enacting the HAC Act in 1989 and the Commission likewise should recognize the great need that telecoil users have to be able to inductively couple to a phone in order to access the digital phone system that in 1995 was the phone system of the future but is now very much a reality and here to stay.

SHHH believes that technical solutions on the phone side together with increased immunity of hearing aids and cochlear implants will make significant headway in solving the problem of accessibility of mobile phones for hearing aid and cochlear implant users.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Battat". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Brenda" and last name "Battat" clearly legible.

Brenda Battat
Director of Public Policy and State Development
SHHH
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, Maryland 20814
301-657-2248
battat@shhh.org